

HRT* AND THE MENOPAUSE



WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE MENOPAUSE?

During the menopause there is a sharp decrease in the amount of oestrogen (known as oestrogen depletion) and progesterone produced by the ovaries.

As well as causing irregular periods during the menopausal transition, oestrogen depletion causes the characteristic symptoms of menopause, such as hot flushes and night sweats, which are known as 'vasomotor symptoms'. It can also cause mood changes, and many other symptoms.

HOW DOES HRT WORK?

For women who seek help for their menopausal symptoms, HRT is the most commonly prescribed treatment. HRT works by replacing the depleted oestrogen in your body, so that you have a similar level as you had before the menopause.

If you have a womb you should be offered HRT that contains oestrogen and progestogen. This is because oestrogen-only HRT can be harmful to the lining of the womb. If you don't have a womb you should be offered oestrogen-only HRT.



A healthy diet: the fall in the level of oestrogen that is part of the menopause can increase the risk of heart disease and osteoporosis. Keeping your diet low in saturated fat and salt can reduce blood pressure and food rich in calcium and vitamin D helps to strengthen bones.



Regular exercise: mood changes and anxiety often arise as a result of the menopause. Taking regular exercise helps to improve mood and is also important for the health of your heart.



Stop smoking: smoking has been shown to lead to an earlier menopause and to trigger hot flushes. Smoking also increases the risk of osteoporosis and coronary heart disease, which is the most common cause of death in women.



Drink within reason: alcohol increases hot flushes and increases the risk of breast cancer. Try not to drink more than 2-3 units of alcohol a day and keep at least one day a week alcohol-free.



Keep positive: relaxation techniques and counselling can be very helpful in coping with anxiety and low mood that can arise as a result of the menopause.

HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT) JOURNEY DIARY

It can be difficult to come to terms with the changes you are experiencing in your body during the menopause, and equally as difficult to discuss them with your doctor.

This simple score sheet can be completed to help you track your response to HRT treatment over the first 6 months of use. The more details you can provide about your symptoms, the easier it will be for your doctor to advise you on how to proceed with treatment.

Please indicate the extent to which you are bothered by any of these symptoms at different stages of your treatment:

SCORING: 0 = Not at all ; 1 = A little ; 2 = Quite a bit ; 3 = Extremely

	Score before starting HRT Date:/...../.....	3 months after starting HRT Date:/...../.....	6 months after starting HRT Date:/...../.....
Heart beating quickly or strongly			
Feeling tense or nervous			
Difficulty in sleeping			
Attacks of anxiety, panic			
Difficulty in concentrating			
Feeling tired or lacking in energy			
Loss of interest in most things			
Feeling unhappy or depressed			
Crying spells			
Irritability			
Feeling dizzy or faint			
Headaches			
Muscle and joint pains			
Hot flushes			
Sweating at night			
Loss of interest in sex			
Vaginal dryness			
Urinary symptoms			

Adaptation from the Green Climacteric Scale, Greene, J, A factor analytic study of climacteric symptoms; Journal of Psychosomatic Research (1976), 20, 425-430.

Speak to your doctor regularly.
Your symptoms may indicate that you require a change in your treatment.